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Comm Dev Admin

August 4, 2000

Corvallis Planning Commission
P.O. Box 1083
Corvallis, OR 97333

RE: West Hills Corridor Plan

Dear Commissioners:

I want to state in writing why I believe that the Planning Commission must oppose Option A.

Option C is a viable option hammered out over years of dialogue with city engineers and planners. Many suggestions, approaches, and other unsafe and unworkable options were eliminated along the way. If Option C were not safe, it would have been eliminated a long time ago. In what we understood to be a collaborative process with the city planners, we thought that we were developing together a viable option that had the backing of the city engineers and planners. So, we were surprised that Option A kept showing up on the agenda. The local residents whose children will be using the walkways and bikeways helped design it to be safe along with input from the city planners. No convincing evidence has ever been presented that Option C will present any significant increase in hazards or dangers for users. Option A is more expensive. Option A defeats the stated goals of the plan to preserve the rural character of the neighborhood. Plan A, deceptively pictured as retaining all the trees in the report, would in fact require the cutting down of many 80 year old conifers and might also negatively impact the riparian area at the base of the hill. Plan A will not significantly improve traffic flow over Option C because the number and width of lanes will be the same.

Recommending Option A would support bureaucracy over democracy and severely discourage rather than promote future citizen involvement. Recommending Option A demonstrates total disregard for the many years of effort to collect

citizen input on the plan. Public opposition to Option A has been overwhelming throughout including the recent planning commission meeting of August 2nd when all of the public testimony was in opposition. To support Plan A would defeat the plan's stated goal to incorporate local citizen input. The study was mailed to me and I assume other citizens along with a form for feedback. I sent in my feedback. No results were reported as to public response to the recommendation in the report. This information should be provided for the commission in considering any further action.

If the Planning Commission ends up viewing Option A as clearly the best and safest, then it must severely question the process in which citizen input ends up being squelched. Rather than support Option A, send it back to the planners to develop a proposal that is responsive to citizen input. Send a clear message to city employees that they are first and foremost public servants, not experts who impose what they believe is good for us in spite of our objections. Citizens should not have to waste their time participating in all the oftentimes tedious meetings that citizen involvement in democracy requires only to find out that the system is not empowering this citizen input to be effective in any meaningful way. Let's just have the city impose Option A and eliminate the expensive democratic charade that involved two consulting firms. Let citizens spend their time and energy when and where they can truly make a difference, at the ballot box.

Again, I urge you not to get caught up in the details of engineering technicalities and ask yourself, "Must transportation needs be met in ways that sacrifice the beauty and livability of our neighborhoods?" "Must we sacrifice this rural greenway and call it improvement?" "Is this what our people want?" and "Has this process been democratic or is it squelching further citizen involvement and increasing distrust and cynicism in government?" Is Option A so superior and safe that it justifies these negative impacts? I don't think so.

Respectfully submitted,

John Swanson